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INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3420
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 5646

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000002

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/INS, PM/CBM, PM/PRO

STATE FOR SCA/PPD, PA/RRU

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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [OPRC](#) [NP](#)

SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION: EXIT FROM AFGHANISTAN

¶1. SUMMARY: Nepal's state-owned English daily, The Rising Nepal (circulation: 5,000), on Monday, January 4 published an OP-ED piece titled "Easy Entry, Exacting Exit," by a journalism professor and former chief editor of the paper. The piece discussed the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and said that without adequate capacity building of the Afghan government, Washington will have to postpone a complete pullout for a longer period.

¶2. EXCERPTS: "US President Barack Obama seems to be responding to the military needs in Afghanistan and, at the same, time finding an exit path in the eventual course for both American and other foreign forces stationed in that war-torn country that has seen one war after another since the last 30 years, without any definitive certainty as to when exactly peace and normalcy will return."

¶3. "Even as casualties mount and expenses pile up while years pass by, the major capitals among the 42 [alliance courtiers] are aware that the exit plan is extremely difficult to formulate, let alone implement."

¶4. "Washington's strategy seems to be a two-pronged one - try to make a significantly increased troop deployment to check the insurgents and strengthen the Afghan government's capacity to hold on to the situation effectively on its own and."

¶5. "Clearly, the exit is not becoming as easy as the entry nearly nine years ago. The exit will be complex, and the allies helping Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government cannot just leave the land without ensuring that the Kabul regime of the day is strong enough to at least fend off the Taliban."

¶6. "The Taliban today has spread its tentacles at the grassroots level. Analysts think that Al-Qaeda is no longer a major factor in the Afghan war, where the principal combatants are now the American military and the Taliban. There are fears that an American withdrawal any time soon might lead to division of Afghan territory along ethnic lines. This is an area where Washington will have to devote much attention in view of the fact that a phased pullout of the US troops is expected to start next year. Without adequate capacity building of the Afghan government, Washington will have to postpone a complete pullout for a longer period."

